The New Relationship Review

BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth

Update from B.C.'s Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation **FALL 2007**

Honourable Michael de Jong
Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

Message from the Minister

This fall I had the great honour and pleasure to introduce treaty settlement legislation for both the Tsawwassen First Nation and Maa-nulth First Nations into the Legislative Assembly. These were historic occasions for all British Columbians, both heralded by ceremonies befitting their great importance – material and symbolic – to the many Aboriginal people whose lives these treaties will benefit.

The Tsawwassen First Nation Treaty Settlement Legislation, introduced on October 15, is unique in a double sense as Canada's first urban treaty and as the first Final Agreement initialled under the British Columbia Treaty Commission (BCTC) process to be introduced as legislation.

Legislation for the Maa-nulth First Nations (Huu-ay-aht First Nations, Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/ Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations, Toquaht Nation, Uchucklesaht Tribe, and Ucluelet First Nation) introduced on November 21, is equally unique, as it is the first modern day treaty for Vancouver Island, and the first Final Agreement initialled under the BCTC process representing multiple First Nations.

I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all the many people of good will whose stellar dedication over years brought these two treaties to the legislature. You have made history and demonstrated that modern treaties can be successfully negotiated in British Columbia. In an up-coming New Relationship Review, look for details and photos from these two landmark events.

The Honourable Steven Point was sworn in as British Columbia's 28th Lieutenant Governor on October 1, 2007. Accompanied by Her Honour, Mrs. Gwendolyn Point, Lieutenant Governor Point received congratulations from Premier Gordon Campbell in the legislature. A former elected chief of Skawkale First Nation, provincial court judge, and Chief Commissioner of the British Columbia Treaty Commission, His Honour is British Columbia's first Aboriginal Lieutenant Governor. Jessica McDonald, Deputy Minister to the Premier and Cabinet Secretary, served as Master of Ceremonies.

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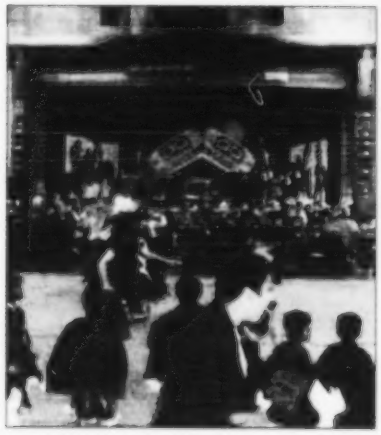
Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong joined chiefs of the Nisga'a Nation at a cultural celebration in honour of guests from the Tsawwassen First Nation and Huu-ay-aht First Nations in July.



Nisga'a Nation hosted a spectacular cultural event.

Nisga'a Hosts First Nations Treaty Tours

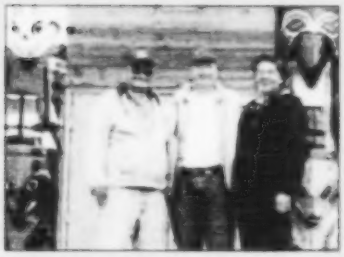
Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong accompanied Chief Kim Baird of the Tsawwassen First Nation and Chief Robert Dennis of the Huu-ay-aht First Nations, along with members from their respective communities, to the Nisga'a Nation on July 17. The two-day tour provided an opportunity to see first-hand what life is like for the Nisga'a people since their treaty took effect in 2000.

Warmly greeted by their Nisga'a hosts, the delegation followed an action-packed agenda that included: a welcoming luncheon, informational workshop sessions; tours to see economic development, social programs and services; an evening cultural celebration showcasing the colour, song, and symbolism of the Nisga'a Nation's rich cultural life. On July 18 the delegation had a historic opportunity to witness the Wilp Si'ayuukhl Nisga'a (the legislative arm of the Nisga'a Lisims Government) in session.

The trip to the Nisga'a Nation provided an invaluable opportunity for the Tsawwassen and Huu-ay-aht representatives to see how the Nisga'a treaty has worked since taking effect, and to speak directly with Nisga'a people about their experience.

Nisga'a Nation hosted a second information-gathering tour September 25-26. More than 100 travellers from four Maa-nulth First Nations (Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nations, Toquaht Nation, Uchucklesaht Tribe, Ucluelet First Nation) embarked on a two-day tour to witness first-hand the life of the Nisga'a people.

Nisga'a Nation dancers entertained their guests from the Maa-nulth First Nations.



Minister Michael de Jong visited six Central and North Coast First Nations in six communities during a July tour. From left: Timothy Innes, Minister de Jong, Gitxaala First Nation Chief Clifford White.

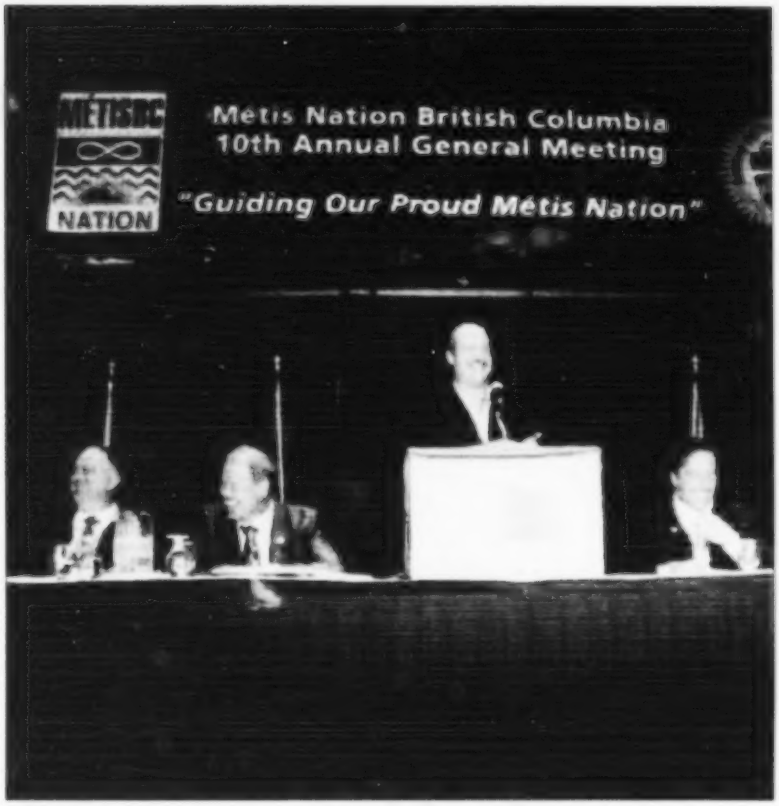
Minister Visits Coastal First Nations

Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong experienced some of the challenges and charms of life along British Columbia's remote, rugged, and beautiful Central and North Coast when he visited six First Nations in six communities during a July 3-9 tour.

The Minister's itinerary included stops at Gitxaala Nation in Kitkatla, Gitga'at Nation in Hartley Bay, Kitasoo Band in Klemtu, Heiltsuk First Nation in Bella Bella, Wuikinuxv First Nation on Rivers Inlet, and Nuxalk Nation in Bella Coola.

Travelling by boat plane and overnighting on a forest scaler boat moored in Kumleon Inlet and Horsefly Cove gave Minister de Jong an opportunity to experience the grandeur of the region's ocean, forest, and mountain environment. The trip offered a chance to appreciate the reality of transportation challenges and vulnerability to seasonal storms faced by residents of small, Aboriginal coastal communities.

Accompanied by Deputy Minister Lorne Brownsey, Minister de Jong met with chiefs and band members, gaining through the process a personal perspective on community aspirations, economic realities, and social concerns.



Minister de Jong received a warm welcome at Métis Nation BC's 10th anniversary Annual General Meeting in Kelowna in September. He is flanked by MNBC President Bruce Dumont, left, and MNBC CEO Keith Henry. MNBC gave Minister de Jong the the Michif/Cree nickname of Ecapaw, meaning "the unshakeable one".

Métis Celebrate 10th AGM

Métis communities across British Columbia can take steps to encourage their members to lead healthier lifestyles in support of ActNow BC goals, thanks to funding announced by Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong at Métis Nation British Columbia's 10th anniversary Annual General Meeting in Kelowna last September.

"The Métis population has significantly higher rates of arthritis, heart disease and diabetes than other British Columbians," said de Jong.

"We know that these chronic diseases can be preventable through proper nutrition and increased physical activity."

The National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCAH) and the First Nations Leadership Council received $6 million in funding from the Province last March. NCCAH granted funding to Métis Nation of British Columbia to create nine programs, including promotion of wellness, chronic disease prevention, and options to increase physical activity, available in Métis communities across the province.

For more information on ActNow BC visit **www.actnowbc.ca**

On behalf of the Province, Community Services Minister Ida Chong welcomed 15 Aboriginal youth last September to their new roles in the BC Public Service as part of the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program. Front from left: Ellen Newman – Haida, Kwagiulth and Coast Salish Nations, Tresley Tourond-Bouvier – Métis Nation British Columbia, Elaine Alec – Penticton Indian Band, Matthew Louie – Cowichan Tribes, Minister Chong, Carnelynn Victor – Cheam First Nation, Krista Wilson – Gitxsan and Cree Nations, Theresa Morris – Wet'suwet'en and T'lazten Nations. Back, from left: Ayla Brown – Heiltsuk Nation and Nuu-cha-nulth Tribal Council, Carly Cunningham – Cree-Métis, Natasha Fountain – Nooaitch Indian Band, Sara-Lynn Johnson – Exketemc First Nation, Marie Sandy – Secewepemc (Shuswap) from T'exelc (Williams Lake Indian Band), Don Tom – Saanich Nation, Tsartlip Band, Jase Robinson – Ahousaht First Nation. Not in photo: Theresa Point – Stó:lō Nation.

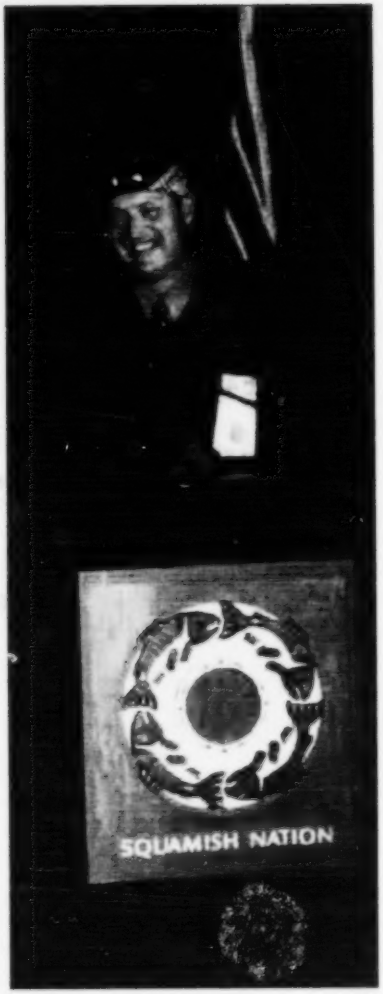
Aboriginal Youth Internship Program Flourishes

Fifteen Aboriginal youth were welcomed to their new roles in the BC Public Service in September, as part of the Aboriginal Youth Internship Program.

First announced last spring, the internship program honours a 2006 throne speech commitment. It was originally intended to accommodate ten interns; however due to significant interest five additional intern spaces were created. The program drew applications from 80 Aboriginal youth representing First Nations and Métis from across British Columbia, indicating a strong interest that will help ensure future candidates for the program.

Successful applicants have been placed in nine different ministries for nine-month work periods, followed immediately by three-month placements in Aboriginal organizations.

The Province of British Columbia sought input and advice from several organizations representing Aboriginal people, including: the BC Assembly of First Nations; First Nations Summit; Union of BC Indian Chiefs; Métis Nation British Columbia; and the Unified Aboriginal Youth Collective as represented by the BC United Métis Youth Circle, Building Our Legacy Together, the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres - Provincial Aboriginal Youth Council, Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association, First Nations Youth Caucus and United Native Nations Youth Governance.



Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong addressed the Squamish Nation in July. As is often customary, Squamish Nation bestowed a small gift of money on the Minister as a form of thanks.

Land Use Agreements Achieved

The Province concluded major land use agreements with Squamish Nation and In-SHUCK-ch Nation. Resulting from a successful partnership approach, the agreements will protect cultural areas, support sustainable economic opportunities, and foster collaborative resource management.

Mungo Martin House in Victoria's Thunderbird Park hosted a National Aboriginal Day announcement by Minister de Jong committing a $1.2 million funding package to support the revitalization of First Nations languages and culture in British Columbia. Esquimalt First Nation drummers and dancers entertained attendees, while Songhees and Esquimalt Nations members were on hand to help welcome everyone.

Good News Comes by Canoe on National Aboriginal Day

Celebrating National Aboriginal Day on June 21, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Michael de Jong arrived by canoe at Victoria's Inner Harbour to a make a major funding announcement at Mungo Martin House in Thunderbird Park to support Aboriginal languages and culture.

Leaders from Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations granted the canoe party permission to land. They disembarked from a single, long, sleek racing canoe belonging to the Cecelia Sara Canoe Club after a three kilometre voyage from the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation o☒ces on Jutland Road waterfront to the Inner Habour.

Paddling with precision and confidence, Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong got a little help from his friends to arrive in downtown Victoria to make a National Aboriginal Day announcement. From bow to stern: Cecelia Sara Canoe Club youth paddlers Cecelia Pelkey, Louis Cooper, Xavier Pelkey; MARR Minister de Jong; Regional Chief Shawn Atleo - BC Assembly of First Nations; Tyrone McNeil - chair of First Peoples' Heritage, Language, and Culture Council; Lorne Brownsey - MARR Deputy Minister; Monique Gray Smith - Executive Director, Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC; Cli☒ Fregin - CEO New Relationship Trust; Ben Morton MARR - Senior Advisor, Education and Culture; Cecilia Sara Canoe Club skipper Ignatius Pelkey.

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Once ashore, the Minister joined a colourful procession, led by Esquimalt First Nation drummers and dancers in traditional dress and singing songs. Downtown tourists and on-lookers milling around the Empress Hotel and the Royal British Columbia Museum joined the group on its way to Wawadit'la Mungo Martin House, a traditional big house in Thunderbird Park similar to one that once stood at Tsaxis (Fort Rupert), built by Chief Nakap'ankam. After opening ceremonies, Minister de Jong announced a $1.2 million funding package to support the revitalization of First Nations languages and culture in British Columbia.

"We are committed to restoring fluency and literacy in First Nations languages," said Minister de Jong. "On National Aboriginal Day, Canadians and British Columbians are coming together to celebrate Aboriginal culture. It's an important part of our province's history and it needs to be revitalized and preserved for future generations."

The Province of British Columbia, the New Relationship Trust (NRT), the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council (FPHLCC), and the Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC contributed to the funding to support:

- Language and culture camps;
- Language and culture master-apprentice programs between Elders and First Nation learners;
- Pre-school language and culture immersion programs; and
- First Nations community language and culture authorities.

NRT CEO Cliff Fregin, FPHLCC chair Tyrone McNeil, and Aboriginal Head Start Association of BC Executive Director Monique Gray Smith also addressed the gathering of about 100 people.

Esquimalt Nation members entertained guests at National Aboriginal Day Celebrations on June 21 hosted by the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) in Victoria.

Aboriginal Employees Recognized

Whether tapping toes to a lively Métis jig or watching the Esquimalt Nation singers and dancers perform, Aboriginal employees from the Public Service of British Columbia enjoyed National Aboriginal Day as honoured guests of the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation during celebrations at Selkirk Waterfront in Victoria on June 21.

"Thanks so much for everything you bring to your work as valued employees of the Province of British Columbia," Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong told the gathering of about 300 people. "You consistently demonstrate outstanding commitment and integrity.

During these historic times, as we build a New Relationship with Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia, we need your skill, insight, energy and leadership to support this great work."

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